

N I L U S

AN ELEGY.

OCCASIONED BY

THE VICTORY OF

ADMIRAL NELSON

OVER THE

FRENCH FLEET,

ON AUGUST 1, 1798.

BY EYLES IRWIN, ESQ.

Horrenda late nomen in ultimas
Extendat oras, quæ medius liquor
Sæcurnit Europen ab Afro;
Quæ tumidus rigat arva Nilus; Ho

LONDON:

PRINTED BY W. BULMER AND CO.

FOR C. NICOL, BOOKSELLER TO MAJESTY,

PALL-MALL.

1798.

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ON AUGUST 1, 1805.



BY EYRE, WILKINSON, & CO.

Hotter and later women in Britain
Extending over, that medium paper
Society Europe and Asia
Our friends are all in the

LONDON:

PRINTED BY W. BARNES AND CO.
FOR G. NICHOLSON, BOOKSELLER TO HER MAJESTY.

PALE-MALL.

1805.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
GEORGE EARL SPENCER, LL.D.

FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY, &c.

THE FRIEND OF THE MUSES,

AND PATRON OF NAVAL MERIT!

UNDER WHOSE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC AUSPICES,

LETTERS HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED, AND

THE BRITISH NAVY

ELEVATED TO A PINNACLE OF GREATNESS,

UNLOOKED-FOR, AND UNEXAMPLED!

THIS POEM,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

HIS OBEDIENT SERVANT,

Dublin;

October 20, 1798.

THE AUTHOR

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ADVERTISEMENT.

AN ELEGY.

It may appear presumptuous to recall the public attention to the distance of twenty years; but the connection of the present Poem, with the Author's Ode to the Nile, published in his Travels, obliges him to trespass on its patience on this occasion. The memory of past troubles, leaves no unpleasing sensations on a feeling mind; and the allusion to past delights is, perhaps, one of its highest gratifications. How he succeeded in his lighter attempt, the Public have already determined; but how this more important composition will be received, remains to be known. The only apology he can offer for the present Poem, is his knowledge of the scene of action, and admiration of the naval character; his veneration for the Egyptian remains; and his hope, that this early effusion will excite a more noble and lasting monument of the BATTLE OF THE NILE.

And Arab guide—to thee, unfurl'd his sails;
For Delta's meads exchanged a scene forlorn;
And scorching whirlwinds, for salubrious gales;

ADVERTISEMENT.

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N I L U S ;

AN ELEGY.

And less more for thee, I court the Memphic Muse,
 At Glory's summons, kindle, as I turn
 To view the mirror, that reflects the hues
 Fond memory pours, unfading, from her urn.
 Not such the prospects as in youthful prime,
 Her artless hand of Nilus' beauties drew ;
 When joy and fanny hail'd the laughing clime,
 And all was blooming, picturesque and new.
 That time from Thebais' waste, the traveller home,
 And Arab guile—to thee, unfurl'd his sails ;
 Or Delta's meads exchanged a scene forlorn,
 And scorching whirlwinds, for salubrious gales !

As well with thine might other floods compare,
 Of cities, with their arts and science, boast :
 To match thy monuments and wonders, dare,
 And all the trophies that adorn thy coast.

AN ELEGY

Ah me ! how mark'd with many a fearful chance,
 The realm, enrich'd with thy prolific stream ;
 Since AMRAM'S* cradle there was seen to dance,
 And beauty's eye with pity's ray to beam.

But, + nor the monarchs of the Median race,
 Nor Ammon's splendours, shall exalt thy name ;
 Nor Roman eagles hold their ' pride of place,'
 Nor Frank, nor Soldan, more prefer his claim ;
 For NELSON comes ! — with bold adventure warm,
 His country's foes in quick dismay to whelm,
 Burst on the phalanx, like the Etesian storm,
 And grasp the trident of the watery realm !

* Makes the son of Amram. Stanza 6. Vide Notes.

He comes ! but Fortune, jealous of his course,
 Of half his prey the victor's beak deprives !
 The Chief, on land who shuns no mortal force,
 Like leaves autumnal, now o'er ocean drives !

On Revolution's wheel, see, France ! thy hope,
 His rival distance, but with speed unmeet ;
 To give on Mamlouk despots, vengeance scope,
 And leave to chance thy honour, and thy fleet.

From Actium that, the slave of passion fled,
 For Beauty's smile his life and fame to wave,
 Thus to his former glories, Pompey dead,
 In Egypt found a dagger and a grave !

Nor him resembles less the Spartan king,
 Who, after struggles past, for wealth and power,
 To Nilus hastes on vanity's light wing,
 And meets conviction in his chiding choir.

And now, amid the cannons' thundering sound,
 The incessant * Saint's * * * * *

But still thy navy of its stay beneath
Just to its former name, no doubt appals
The gallant Bruce, to valour's dictates left,
The issue waits, to conquer, or to fall
With obvious skill, he notes a station fit,
The Briton's genius eager to oppose;
A narrow road, no tactics to admit,
Or trouble'd surge, manœuvres to disclose
Tay western mouth, old Nilus straight he sought,
From ocean shelter'd by a shelving isle;
Whose rear beneath, on currents smooth, were brought
His lofty vessels in embattled file
Nor waiting batteries dread the pass to guard,
Nor from caution, what from art proceeds;
Untry'd the foe, unknown the high award!
His claim to victory founded on his deeds

But vain that claim, look Mincius' rapid flood
In Boreas' van, the Cyclops boom to grind
In Neptune's scales ne'er hung so rich a prize,
For hostile worth to vanquish, or defend
The channel's pass'd, the batteries level'd low
The Gallic line assail'd on either side:
By NELSON broke, impends the fatal blow,
Reserved by fate to crush their naval pride
The enormous bear, thus, buoy'd on icy fields
Her tawny hunters dares, in conspicuous force,
By wounds untamed, in death her offspring shields,
"Till ocean labours with the ponderous core
The conflict rages, in the lists of fame
Her mighty bulk, the ORIENT, proud uprears:
Ah! see enwrapp'd her towering crest in flame,
In friend and foe that awakes equal fears
And now, amid the cannons' thundering sound,
The incessant flash, the seaman's piercing cry,

The explosion's heard—that shakes the coasts around;

And fills the ringing concave of the sky!

At Ammon's city Pompey's column reels;

Uptorn, her obelisk extends its length:

While, to his fate, the shock convulsive feels

The pyramid—immortal in his strength!

The Nile—heretofore on the bank amazed,

Impetuous rushes to the boiling flood;

While, startled from the ooze, with scales upraised

The crocodile suspends his thirst for blood;

Not Austria's duke, nor famed Lepanto's strand

Such perils courted, or such laurels won;

At Chesme's bay, though blazed the Russian brand,

Like France, not Ochman's navy was undone

From eve to morn the combatants contend;

For victory 'mid death and darkness strive;

And now, amid the cannon's thundering sound,

The incessant din, amidst a picture

But when the welcome tints of light ascend,

All ALBION's triumphs in her son revive!

Dismasted, shatter'd, circled in the toils,

The Gallic line their flags, desponding, cower;

The dastard fugitives,* who bask his spoils,

Best vouch, by flight, the conqueror's skill and power.

What strain sublime,† may hope to reach the praise,

Yet unassay'd, of NELSON's favour'd band;

Whom union binds, and zeal and valour raise

Above the naval virtue of the land.

This their renown—that each his post sustain'd,

By jealousy unsway'd, or doubt, or fear;

Till WESTCOTT, who in death distinction gain'd,

From victory stole the trophy of a tear!

Nor yet the generous mariner repines,

His arm the bulwark of the foe eludes;

* Stanza 25.

† Stanza 26. Vide Notes.

Who haply now in *Hellé's* * bowers reclines—
O'er schemes of war in Cairo's fortress broods. A H A

Whether, on venturous wing, he mean to soar
To Nilus' † cataracts, or distant source;
Thebais' wild, or Nubia's sands explore,
Or harness kings—to dignify his course:

Or, sworn by flattery, deem the gate to hold,
Which, o'er the Erythean gulf, to Ophir leads;
The British India his, her trade, her gold!—
A labour, wanting to Alcides' deeds!

Nor him may courage long, nor skill avail,
The assassin's steel or drug, aside to turn;
Quick shall the powers of BUONAPARTE fail,
If, through his veins, pestiferous torrents burn.

Then, of his numerous host, the victims brief,
Of fell ambition! will a friend be found,

* Stanza 28.

† Stanza 29.

Vide Notes.

pay just honours to their mighty Chief,
And bid his tomb unfading bays surround!

if a foe the chaplet fresh may twine
For thy desert, which envy might presage;
latest times thy memory consign,
To live, with Cæsar's, in the heroic page:

igh is due to talents misapply'd;
A waste of prowess, and of martial lore:
ich deluged Europe with a crimson tide,
And hurl'd Alecto's brands on Afric's shore.

hen summer suns, dissolving Nilus' trance,
O'er thirsty Delta lift his fruitful wave;
e tearful *lotus*,* from the gay expanse,
shall bend her cup to dew the hero's grave!

d when the winter solstice bids retire
His world of waters to their narrow bed,

* Stanza 35. Vide Notes.

he tall *papyrus* yearly shall aspire, or
To bear a fragile record of the dead!

if a foe the chaplet fresh may twine
on thy desert, which envy might preface;
latest times thy memory consign
to live, with Great's, in the heroic page;

And hail'd Allecto's brands on Africa's shore,
which deluged Europe with crimson tide,
A waste of prowess, and martial lore;



Or thirsty Delta lift his fruitful wave;
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tearful lotus, from the gay expanse,
shall bend her cup to dew the hero's grave;

his world of waters to their narrow bed,
when the winter solstice bids retire

NOTES TO THE ELEGY.

Stanza 6. ' *But, nor the monarchs of the Median race.*'

The frequent invasions that have changed the constitution of Egypt, are no questionable proofs of her value. From the days of Sesostris to the present hour, one conqueror has succeeded another, of almost every clime and religion; nor are the exploits of the Greeks and Romans more worthy of record, than those of the Saracens and Turks; the Christian and infidel leaders of France! *Vide Un. His.*

Stanza 11. ' *Nor him resembles less the Spartan king.*'

When Agesilaus led an army of Greek mercenaries to Egypt, to free that kingdom from the Persian power, he experienced a rude reception from the people, and ingratitude from the chief who had invited him. A timely revolution, to which he was greatly instrumental, changed the face of affairs. But when he was enabled to return to Sparta, loaded with wealth, by the liberality of the usurper, who owed his success to Agesilaus, death put an end to his ambitious career at the advanced age of 84, in the gulf of Sidra, where his fleet had taken refuge from a storm. *Plutarch.*

Stanza 13. ' *With obvious skill, he notes a station fit.*'

The precaution and courage of the French admiral cannot be questioned, as well previous to, as during this bloody action.

Vide London Gazette, and Paris accounts of the action.

Stanza 21. ' *At Ammon's city Pompey's column rears.*'

The Pillar of Pompey, and the Needles of Cleopatra, are the most remarkable remains of antiquity at Alexandria; and sufficient to justify the highest ideas of the beauty and splendour of that city. One of the

needles is prostrate and broken; doubtless the effect of an earthquake, and perhaps, of that dreadful one, which subverted the Colossus of Rhodes.

Bruce. Savary

Stanza 23. ' *Not Austria's duke, on famed Lepanto's strand,
At Chesmè's bay, though blazed the Russian brand.*'

The battle of Lepanto, between the Christians and Turks, in the year 1571 is one of the most celebrated in the Mediterranean, the theatre of great actions ever since the sea was navigated. Though Don John of Austria commanded the fleet, the Venetian gallies composed its chief strength, and to the glory and advantage of that republic, the victory immediately tended. The burning of the Turkish fleet at Cismè, or Chesmè, a strait that divides the island of Scio from the coast of Natolia, in 1770, is a signal event in the history of modern times. Count Orlov commanded the Russian squadron; but to the address of an English captain in that service, the plan of the conflagration, and its successful execution, have been generally attributed.

Stanza 25. ' *The dastard fugitives*—

The fate of these vessels appears not to be consolatory, either to themselves or their country. Of the four that escaped from the battle, the two frigates have been since taken by the Colossus, off Malta: one of the line of battle ships is reported to have been sunk in that harbour, and the other to have been captured by the English! A good account of the enemy's fleet *à-la-mode Nelson*!

Stanza 26. ' *What strain sublime, may hope to reach the praise,*

Yet unassay'd, of Nelson's favour'd band;

Whom union binds—

From the sentiments of a valiant enemy, the clearest testimony in our favour is to be derived. Let Admiral De Brueys speak with greater weight, than can be allowed to their country, of the unequalled services of Nelson and his fleet, at the battle of the Nile. In his intercepted letter

to the French Minister of marine, a few days before the action, De Brueys writes thus confidently of his superiority and security!

“That he considers his situation so impregnable, that if the whole navy of England were to come to the attack, they could make no impression on his line.” It is but fair to add, that the strength of the position has induced this observation from a great naval character—that if Nelson had been in De Brueys’ place, he might have safely defied the combined navies of our enemies!

To the high state of discipline and subordination of the ships under his command, which he justly attributes to Earl St. Vincent, the gallant Nelson acknowledges his success, next to Providence, to be owing. This is the most exalted compliment that was ever paid by one naval officer to another; and proves Nelson to be, in every sense, the worthy pupil and emulator of the heroic St. Vincent! *Vide London Gazette.*

Stanza 28. ‘*Who, haply now in Hellè’s bowers reclines.*’

The gardens of *Hellè* are in the environs of Cairo, and exhibit whatever charms are best calculated to exhilarate the fancy, and captivate the voluptuous feelings. *Vide Savary.*

Stanza 29. ‘*Whether, on venturous wing, he mean to soar
To Nilus’ cataracts*—

For the probable views, and fate of Buonaparte’s expedition to the East, see two pamphlets, containing an Inquiry into that subject; with an Appendix; by the Author of this Poem.

Stanza 35. ‘*The tearful lotus from the gay expanse.*’

Stanza 36. ‘*The tall papyrus yearly shall aspire.*’

These concluding stanzas allude to the annual rise and fall of the Nile. The lotus, calamus, and papyrus, are the most striking plants that distinguish this scene, from all others of the same complexion. The vicinage of Damietta, is thus delineated by the pen of an instructive and agreeable traveller.

"The verdure is no where so fresh; the trees are no where covered with such quantities of fruit. The rivulets around the fields of rice, are lined with several kinds of reeds. The *calamus* is there found in abundance, which is made use of for writing by the Orientals. Its slender stalk bears long narrow leaves, which hang gracefully, and spreading branches, covered with white flowers. I have there seen forests of papyrus, of which the ancient Egyptians made their paper. This triangular cane, nine feet high, is topped by a woolly tuft. Strabo calls it *Biblus*. It is there also, that the lotus exalts its lofty stalk above the waters. Its large calix blows either of an azure blue, or a brilliant white and it appears with the majesty of the king of the aquatic plants. The marshes and canals of the interior are filled with this superb flower which diffuses a most agreeable odour." *Vide Savary.*

